

# FRITZ POLLARD CLASS OF 2005

**Back, Coach - 5-9, 165 - Bates, Brown**

**1919-1921, 1925-26 Akron Pros/Indians**  
**1922 Milwaukee Badgers**  
**1923, 1925 Hammond Pros**  
**1923-1924 Gilberton Cadamounds**  
*(independent pro team)*  
**1925 Providence Steam Roller**  
**(eight playing seasons)**



Fritz Pollard, an All-America halfback from Brown University was a pro football pioneer in more ways than one. The 5-9, 165-pound back, who led Brown to the Rose Bowl in 1915, turned pro in 1919, when he joined the Akron (OH) Pros following army service during World War I. In 1920, the Pros joined the newly founded American Professional Football Association, later

renamed the National Football League. That season, with Pollard leading the charge, the Pros went undefeated (8-0-3) to win the league's first crown.

As a member of the new league, Pollard immediately earned a place in pro football history as one of just two African Americans in the new league. In 1921 he earned another distinction becoming the first African American head coach in NFL history when the Pros named him co-coach of the team.

## CAREER STATISTICS

Games Played:		
1919	Akron*	4
1920	Akron	11
1921	Akron	12
1922	Milwaukee	7
1923	Hammond/Gilberton**	11
1924	Gilberton**	7
1925	Hammond/Akron/Providence	13
1926	Akron	4
<b>Career Total</b>		<b>69</b>

\* Pre-NFL; \*\* Gilberton Cadamounds were an Independent pro team.  
Number of games played information is based on best available information.

Contemporary accounts indicate that Pollard, an exciting elusive runner, was the most feared running back in the fledgling league. During his pro football career the two-time All-America played and sometimes coached for four different NFL teams, the Pros/Indians (1920-21/1925-26), the Milwaukee Badgers (1922), the Hammond Pros (1923, 1925), and the Providence Steam Roller (1925). Fritz also spent time in 1923 and 1924 playing for the Gilberton Cadamounds, a strong independent pro team in the Pennsylvania "Coal League."

In 1928, Pollard organized and coached the Chicago Black Hawks, an all-African American professional team based in the Windy City. Pollard's Black Hawks played against white teams around Chicago, but enjoyed their greatest success by scheduling exhibition games against West Coast teams during the winter months. From 1929 until 1932 when the Depression caused the team to fold, the Black Hawks had become one of the more popular teams on the West Coast.

## BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

**Elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame:**

February 5, 2005

**Enshrined into the Pro Football Hall of Fame:**

August 7, 2005

**Other Members of the Class of 2005:**

Benny Friedman, Dan Marino, Steve Young

**Full Name:** Frederick Douglass Pollard

**Birthdate:** January 27, 1894

**Birthplace:** Chicago, Illinois

**Died:** May 11, 1986 at Silver Spring, Maryland

**High School:** Albert G. Lane Tech (Chicago, IL)

**Pro Career:** Eight seasons

**Uniform Number:** #1 - (also briefly wore #11 with Hammond Pros)

## COACHING RECORD

		Regular Season			
Team	Year	W	L	T	PCT.
Akron*	1921	8	3	1	.727
Hammond	1925	0	1	0	.000
	<b>TOT</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>.654</b>

\* Co-coach with Elgie Tobin. Note: Various accounts indicate that Pollard also served as co-coach of the Milwaukee Badgers with Al Garrett for part of the 1922 season. He also coached non-NFL Gilberton in 1923 and is believed to have had some coaching duties with Hammond in 1923 as well.

## ALL-LEAGUE TEAMS

AII-NFL:  
1920 (RI)

## PRO BOWLS

The Pro Bowl series began following Pollard's career.

### YEAR-BY-YEAR TEAM RECORDS

1920	Akron Pros	8-0-3	(1st)*
1921	Akron Pros	8-3-1	(3rd)
1922	Milwaukee Badgers	2-4-3	(11th)
1923	Hammond Pros	1-5-1	(15th)
1925	Akron Indians	4-2-0	(5th)
	Hammond Pros	1-4-0	(14th)
	Providence Steam Roller	6-5-1	(10th)
1926	Akron Indians	1-4-3	(16th)

(League/Division Finish in Parentheses.) \* League champions. Prior to 1932, the NFL's champion was determined by the best record during the regular season.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

*Excerpt from Total Football II (Harper Collins, 1999)*

In 1921, Pollard became the first African-American to serve as an NFL head coach. But he not only was the Akron Pros' coach that year, he also was their star runner and team leader.

A fast, elusive, and courageous runner, Pollard led Brown University to the Rose Bowl in 1915 and was a consensus All-America that next year - only the second African-American to be so honored. After army service in World War I, he joined Akron the year before the NFL was formed. In 1920, when the Pros went undefeated to win the league's first championship, defense was the team's strength, but contemporary accounts indicated Pollard was the most feared running back in the fledgling league.

After 1921, he played and sometimes coached for Milwaukee, Hammond, Providence, and Akron again through 1926. He played as many or more games for strong independent teams in the Pennsylvania coal district.

After his player career ended, Pollard organized and coached the Chicago Brown Bombers, an independent team of African-Americans that played from 1927-1933. Then he went on to a successful business career. He was elected to the College Football Hall of Fame in 1954.

